539 726 he had danced before all the sections he began to call '*Uyezwa, uti, Aiyima ngcito*', 'Do you hear? Stand to arms.' Immediately section by section got up and rushed forward with noise and whistling deafening the ears. The warriors stood in crowds near the stockade and almost surrounding it. When the army was small, they stood in the shape of a young crescent moon. While they did so, they were blowing their horns and whistling to drown the noise in the stockade.

Very soon the message was heard: '*Utsho njalo yena, uti, Asiqwebane*', 'Thus it is said, let the bulls fight.' On these words the warriors ran at the stockade with one heart and a noise like wind and the country was filled with the tread of their feet. For a short time there would sometimes be silence, then a shout would be heard from a section: '*Nginga pakati: kuti loko*', 'I am inside: I of such and such a village.' The man who was first in the stockade would name his village. Then there would be heard, '*Nginawe, wmakwetu*', 'I am with you, comrade.' All the *izinduna* and warriors fought in their own sections but once the army was inside they began to ask for the name of the first man in and those who had been near gave the name of the heroes. So each *induna* knew all about what had happened in his own section before he met the war *induna*, and when the latter reported to the Paramount at home he could tell everything.

Return from war

539 727 Long ago all that was found in the village or stockade (goats, sheep and cattle) belonged of right to the man who had entered first. That was easy when they sent only one company to the attack. All the other things belonged to the finder. Afterwards when all the warriors went to the attack together, it was difficult to distinguish who had got in first and so the spoils went to the man who reached them first. The Paramount had [643] his portion of everything taken. Outside the stockade those who had taken cattle put aside two or three which they said were *amahloma ankosi*, the first taste to the Paramount.

On the return all who had dipped their spears in the blood of their enemies carried what the killed had been wearing and their weapons or bows. If a man had killed a woman he wore her things (that is her ornaments, bark-cloth, etc.). These things were done to fulfil a taboo. When [783] the end of the time of purification came, all those things that were worthless were thrown away or burned, but the beautiful things were kept. Only the very old people wore the clothes of the killed.

When the army was on the way home it looked for bones of animals and burned them and ground them fine like flour, and also made charcoal dust. On the day of arrival some flour was kneaded and bone dust and the charcoal dust each by itself. They painted themselves on the face and on the body. This custom was to show those who had speared an enemy in the fight.

When the army was near their own country the war *induna* chose some messengers to go and give the news of the fighting and the names of those who had been killed. These messengers went to the important *izinduna*, and from them the news went quickly to the Paramount, headmen, and elders. The women were not told quietly; even if a man knew that his son

539 the
727 salutation being '*Amehlo amhlope*', 'Eyes are white', or '*Buyani*', 'Return',
[576] along with the clan name. The answer was '*Yebo*' also with the clan name. This was the custom in the houses where there had been no death. The warriors of a village where there had been a death, either in the village or killed in war, took off their equipment on leaving the kraal and went to the house of mourning.

The warriors' sections went to the head villages of their districts to tell the news and show themselves. Those of Ekwendeni there; of Echigodhlweni there; of Elangeni there; of Emcisweni there; but the sections from the villages of the *amakanda* went together first of all to show themselves
539 to the head villages and then went to their own villages. After the army
727 had broken up, those who had killed a man or had helped to kill a man
● 783 began a purification of four or five days for they were considered to be
[824] unclean. After the time of greetings in the village, the elders came with the bark of certain trees which had been ground or crushed and put it in a frying pan. The frying pan was put on three hearth-stones by the fire, and water poured on. When the water began to boil the men came and began to 'lick the medicine', first one hand and then the other. The first lick they spat out, then they swallowed some, and struck their palms on their knees and on their elbows. They jumped from side to side of the frying pan and as they did so, they said '*Po*'. This was said to drive away the spirits of the enemies whom they had killed because they were afraid that they might come to trouble them in sleep at night.

Very early in the morning they went to the river to wash off the paint, but they still wore the clothes of the men killed. This showed they were
[834] still being purified. They did not live with their wives or touch their children. When they returned from the river they tried to repeat the words they had heard their enemies say. Back in the village they took more of their medicine from the frying pan saying '*Po*'. After that they rubbed themselves all over with lime wash.

On the last day they went to the river again but when they had bathed they burned all they were wearing, or hung them in trees. Only the good things were left: cloth, ivory bracelets, bows and spears. The clothes of the killed they gave to the old people to wear. If water did not take off the paint on their bodies they rubbed on fat from cattle. Then the days of taboo were completed, they were considered to be clean, and could live with their wives and hold their children.

The decoration of heroes

539 After the warriors had been sent to the villages a short time passed,
703 then they were called again together to dance the *ligubo*. On that day bulls
[812] were chosen to be killed for the army. Each section received a bull and it was killed by the hero of the section. While it was being skinned and cooked all the companies were dancing. When the meat was cooked and taken off the fire all the army was busied with eating it, each company by itself. When they had eaten the warriors began to get up one by one to dance and leap before their Paramount. Then the heroes of the sections
[837] were presented with the horns of the bull killed for the section. The horns had had holes bored so that bark-rope could be drawn through and they

2: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1956
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sleeping on mats they slept on grass until the required days were finished, and they scattered to their homes.

This account brings out certain elements in the ritual surrounding the *tonga*. The word *tonga* in the Ngoni language means 'rod', and was used in the very ancient folk tale *Intonga yetusi*, 'The Brass Rod'. There was no rod, however, nor anything representing one, among the medicines or ingredients which together made up the *tonga*. A descendant of one of the early 'guardians' of the *tonga* said about it:

[778]

« The *tonga* is the horn of a sheep, and the horn by itself has no real power, but there are other things which give it power like the rib of a lion.

It is clear that in the past the *tonga* was regarded as giving protection to the Ngoni people, particularly by providing medicine at the accession of a new Paramount when he needed medicine for strengthening.

[178]

Other informants from the Phungwako clan said that the *tonga* provided the medicine with which the Paramount washed at the time of *incwala*, the feast of the first-fruits. No one alive in the 1930's had seen that ceremony and the special songs had been forgotten. A tradition remained that the Paramount had to undergo seclusion and ritual washing with medicines before the first green crops could be eaten.

Throughout the references to the *tonga* there was no hint that it was ever worshipped or addressed in any way similar to the invocations to the ancestor spirits. It was clearly a 'medicine' possessing great power and guarded as a national treasure. The ingredients of the medicine were kept in a particular way, in a particular place, in the guardianship of a particular person. I have seen the ingredients, the place and the guardian, but I gave a promise not to reveal them. I was allowed to handle the objects and, after doing so, I had to perform the ritual act of washing my hands with cowdung. This was the form of ritual cleansing practised by the Paramount after using the medicines.

[515 783]

There were two ways in which these medicines were used by the Paramount to strengthen him on his accession. He washed in the kraal with the medicines whipped into a foam. The old men said that in ancient times the water for making the medicines had to be fetched from the sea. In addition to washing he had to eat meat in which the medicines were mixed. The majority of informants said that beef was used for this ritual eating, while others said that, as in the ritual for preparing the *tonga*, the meat taken was sheep. This ritual was said to have taken place for the last time at the death of Cikusi and the accession of Gomani I, though it was hinted that it had been performed at the accession of the Ngoni chief of the Maseko clan now living in Portuguese territory.

It was clear that the Maseko Paramounts made use of the *tonga* as a royal medicine both at their accession and in time of war. The reference

[766]

2: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1956
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Cattle in the ancestor cult

The Ngoni, unlike the Swazi as described by Dr. Kuper,[1] had no clear ideas about the life after death as lived by their immediate ancestors with whom they had associated in their lifetime. They did not, as the Swazi did, picture them living somewhere surrounded with cattle and other familiar creatures and objects. The importance of bringing the spirit back (*ukubuyisa idlozi*) to the house where it would be cared for signified two main things for them. The first was the continuous association of the spirit of the dead with the living persons in the community to which he had belonged, through the individuals belonging to the house, the actual hut where the sacrificial vessels were kept, and the cattle which belonged to the house. The other significant point was that contact with the returned spirit, and through him with the spirits of more remote ancestors, could only be established in the village containing the cattle of the house to which the dead man had belonged.

We shall be examining some aspects of the ritual of addressing the ancestral spirits in a later chapter of this section. Here we shall establish three constituent parts of the ancestor cult in which cattle were essential links between those taking part in the cult and the spirits whom they addressed.

The first part was the group of ceremonies which took place at death, at the burial, at the first ritual shaving and at bringing back the spirit. A text by Lopati Nzunga (see Chapter IV, p. 200) illustrates how three parts of a beast—the skin, the kidney fat (*nseso*) and the gall bladder (*nyongo*)—were considered essential for Ngoni burial. It was interesting to find in Blantyre among educated Ngoni who were Christians and occupied clerical and commercial posts, that they had given up the cow-skin for wrapping the corpse and substituted a coffin. But they admitted confidentially that in most Ngoni funerals the use of the *nseso* and the *nyongo* was customary. After the burial the ritual shaving, shared in by all who attended the funeral, was accompanied by the killing of a beast and the consumption of its meat, though with no ritual significance beyond its association with the purification of the mourners and their integration as a group. From six to twelve months later the second shaving and the bringing back of the spirit was also accompanied by killing a beast and eating its meat. These ceremonies expressed the sense of loss felt for the human person who had died, the sorrow of the mourners, their successive acts of purification which served to bring them together, and the final bringing of the spirit to live among them again. As we have seen, each stage of the death and mourning rites was accompanied by the eating of a beast or the use of certain parts of a beast. The cattle of the house to which the dead person belonged were used to bury him or her, to strengthen the mourners, and to reintegrate the spirit with the living community.

[1] Kuper, H. *An African Aristocracy*, p. 186.

2: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1956
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grave with the little shelf at one side, the corpse wrapped in a cow-skin, the *nsese* and *nyongo* on the neck and forehead, the bent legs and upright sitting position facing south-east, and washing the face of the corpse at the grave side with a bunch of grass. On this occasion the Ngoni form of burial was followed by the Christian burial service after the grave had been filled in. During the digging of the grave hymns set to the tunes of Ngoni war songs were sung by the onlookers until the body was brought out of the house. After that there was complete silence while the corpse was lowered into the grave and the grave was filled up, until the service began. This combination of Christian and Ngoni ritual I witnessed many times. One of the missions set its face against the use of the cow-skin and declared that no Christian could be buried except in a coffin, but even this was sometimes disregarded and the full Ngoni ritual was carried out, followed by a Christian service.

After the body had been put in the grave and when the first calling back of the spirit from the bush had reminded the living that they had to care for this new spirit, a series of further duties faced them. These have been referred to as the first and second shaving. The first shaving we shall consider later as a necessary purification before eating the meat of the funeral rites which brought back the spirit right into the village. The second shaving, which took place from six to twelve months after the funeral, was the prelude to the time when the new ancestral spirit came, or was brought back, to its final lodging. The importance of this last rite was emphasized by Lopati Nzunga in his account of the ritual which took place at the tomb put up to the memory of Gomani I (see p. 165) When the building of the tomb under the supervision of Ngoni in the area was finished, many leading Ngoni from all parts, including those from the towns, gathered there for two days. Every morning before dawn they went up the forest paths singing war songs, as they did later at the time of the death of Bambo Manga, to call back the spirit from the bush where it had spent some thirty years. After a Christian service held by the tomb, the Ngoni *alumuzana* 'brought back' the spirit to Lizulu, Gomani I's village, to the house of NaMagagula his big wife. She was a Christian, so could not take the care of the spirit in her hut, but another of the widows of Gomani I, NaNsambi, who was in the house of NaMagagula, was chosen as guardian. Earlier in the proceedings, when they had decided that the tomb was going to be built, a diviner was consulted, the spirits were addressed in the kraal, the cattle showed that they agreed, and a beast from the herd of the house of NaMagagula was sacrificed and the meat offered to the ancestral spirits of the Maseko Paramounts. Then they built a new hut for NaNsambi and put in it new sacrificial vessels. When the spirit of Gomani I was finally brought home it was to this hut and guardianship that it came. They were uncertain about what had happened to the spirit in the thirty years interval and it did not seem advisable to probe

2: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1956
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The ritual of the purification of the living

The living had certain rites to carry out on their own behalf which, if omitted, would bring the displeasure of the ancestors upon them. These were essentially purification rites for they removed the defilement of death from each individual who was closely related to, or had performed some office for, the dead; and through the rites the houses and utensils were cleansed, and the living community was re-integrated after the loss of one of its members. Shaving, burning the hair and mourning bands, and washing in a stream, were the prescribed acts for all who were connected by kinship or marriage with the deceased, or who had taken part in preparing the body or digging the grave. These were a succession of rites as we have seen, and emphasized the need for ritual cleansing over a long period, and for renewed integration between the living.

In addition to this generally practised ritual, there were some acts of ritual purification of houses and utensils found only among the Swazi clans. One informant told of the ritual washing of hoes used to dig the grave in the blood of a newly killed sheep. Several others spoke of the cleansing with sheep dung of the huts of the widows of a dead man at the time of the second shaving. On each occasion when meat was offered to the ancestors after a death, the living who ate the meat had to be made ceremonially clean through the act of shaving, followed by ritual washing at the river.

The ritual of addressing the spirits

There was no set formula for addressing the ancestral spirits but there were three parts in all the prayers which I heard and which were recited to me. The first was the naming of the ancestors. The leading clans in the two kingdoms demonstrated the way in which they prayed to their ancestors by repeating the names of successive heads of the clan. They began with the name of the ancestor who had died in Swaziland and those of his father and grandfather and other forbears if known. The Nhlane clan, for example, told me 'We pray: *UNdina ka UNchaba ka UMulawu ka UMazongolo*' and then added: 'UNdina died in our village of Hoho before we left Swaziland and he was buried in the kraal in Hoho.' The Mhlambi clan in central Ngoniland named their ancestor UNgekwazi who died in Swaziland, but they did not know any names before him. Other clans in the central kingdom used the name of their ancestor who crossed the Zambesi with Mputa. The most important element in the prayer, therefore, was the naming of the 'big spirit', sometimes coupled with more remote ancestors.

The second element in addressing the spirits was to call their attention to the beast which was to be offered to them if they 'agreed'. 'Here is your beast' was the formula. Although three or four beasts or even

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939)1960
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844 ready for burning, and generally cleaned up. The fire in the middle of the hut was rekindled to warm the mother and
[262] baby, and gruel was given to the mother of millet flour, brought from the mother-in-law's hut where it had been cooked. With the help of the other women, the mother
[853] washed her breasts with warm water and massaged them to make the milk flow, ready for the child to suck.

845 The other ethnic groups surrounding the Ngoni in Nyasa-
[184] land considered it disastrous if a child was born face down or with the buttocks first, and twins were dreaded as ill omens. The Ngoni shared none of these beliefs and were particularly considerate for the mother of twins, often killing
[262] a beast to give the mother meat and broth to increase her
[853] flow of milk. The only notice the Ngoni took of the method of presentation at birth was that they gave a child a name
[553] indicative of such a birth. They gave special names for the first and second twin born. If one twin died it was buried under the veranda of the hut and a smooth stone was placed
[766] on top. This stone was used for sitting on, and the surviving twin was held on it when being washed.

Ritual and social uncleanness

846 From the time just before the birth took place the hut and
783 everything in it, and the woman and her new baby, were considered ritually unclean. If she had to leave the hut to answer the call of nature, she covered herself with a cloth from head to foot and avoided meeting anyone. She did no cooking herself until the ritual uncleanness was removed. Food was brought to her from her mother-in-law's hut or from her co-wives' huts, a special dish was used and washed separately, and she did not use her hands to eat with but a wooden spoon which was also washed separately. During the period of seclusion within the hut one of the senior women who helped at the birth slept in the hut with the mother and baby. No other young children were allowed to sleep in the hut, though they might come in to see the baby. All males

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1960
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over the age of ten had to avoid the hut and its inhabitants altogether. The husband slept either in the boys' dormitory or with the husband of the woman who was looking after his wife.

This ritual uncleanness extended to any food once it was carried into the hut. Ngoni women used to demonstrate their love for their husbands by stopping cooked food being carried into the hut, and sending it instead by the child who brought it to her husband where the men were gathered at the gate of the kraal.

Ritual cleansing of a hut and its occupants took place in stages. At the time of 'bringing out the child', which I shall shortly describe, the hut itself was made clean again. It was thoroughly swept, and the floor and veranda were smeared with cowdung. Cowdung was used habitually for smearing on floors, prior to polishing them with a smooth stone. But fresh wet cowdung rubbed on the hands was also used for ritual cleansing after some 'dangerous' act such as touching sacred objects or administering the royal medicines. In the case of its use after childbirth it was undoubtedly used in the ritual sense, for the operation was called 'making the hut safe for the husband to sleep in'. The household goods were then put back in their places, anyone could go into the hut, and the husband returned to sleep there, though on a separate mat on his, the right-hand side, of the fireplace. If the child was a first baby, the husband's return to sleep in the hut was delayed, since the senior women stayed on to instruct the young mother how to take care of the baby at night, and especially how to be careful not to smother it as it lay beside her on her mat.

'Coming out of the hut'

The falling of the cord was the signal that the baby was ready to 'come out of the hut' and be presented to the village. Ngoni women used to hasten the falling of the cord by burning a maize cob, and squeezing into the ashes the juice of the

7: Hodgson G-5 (1926) 1933 FR5 Ngoni FR5

within about four months of purchase, the money is refunded, unless it is shown that the owner is to blame. In the case of a sheep or goat, this period is reduced to about six weeks. 233 [672]

It is not the custom to hire out cattle, either for ploughing, or for milk. If a cow brings forth twin calves together, she and her offspring are presented to the headman, as the cow is supposed to be an exceptionally good one; and the headman in return hands over three other animals of similar ages. [427] [431]

V.—Social Organization: Military.

1. *Preparations for War.*

The Ngoni expeditions against the Achewa consisted principally of raids at times when the crops were ripening and they were short of food. At such times the young warriors who thirsted for war signified their desire by dancing outside the house of the chief. After they had danced for three evenings, the chief fixed a day, food was prepared, and warriors were summoned from the neighbouring villages. The *sing'anga* made medicine to protect them against the weapons of their enemies, and as the army filed past him, he dipped a hammer into the medicine; and struck each man on the chest with it. The best-known *sing'anga* under Chief Chiwere was Chimenga, and his name is still held in veneration. 721 726 756

2. *Methods.*

The Angoni usually came upon their foe unawares, and attacked with a rush. If they met with a stout resistance from a stockaded village, they surrounded it and camped till lack of water forced the besieged to sally forth. Quarter was rarely given to the men. 726

3. *Subsequent Proceedings.*

On their return, all who had killed a man repaired immediately to the *sing'anga* who mixed medicine with goats' milk. The warriors dipped their fingers in the mixture and put them into their mouths. Then they dipped again into the mixture, and rubbed it on their arms and legs, after which they stood up and shouted "O-o-o!" This form of purification was undergone in order to drive away the *chisunde* or affliction which they would otherwise suffer from the spirits of their dead enemies, and until they were cleansed they might not have any connexion with women. Next day, they burned goats' bones, pounded them and mixed them in water, smearing the mixture first on cheeks and throat and then over the remainder of their persons. After this they proceeded to their homes and, having decorated themselves, displayed their reasonable pride by jumping about before the chief, who sent for a bull to be cooked and eaten. Prisoners were paraded, and when a man had taken three or more, one of them was always returned to him by the chief. 727 [783] [755]